

What is claimed is :

1. A method of converting a packet of data from a source format to a target format, the packet comprising a type indicator and at least one data field, the method comprising the steps of :

storing a table for each packet type, each table comprising for each data field of that packet type a value representative of a storage requirement in memory and a corresponding field descriptor denoting the nature of the data field;

receiving a packet in a source format;

identifying the type of packet from the type indicator;

accessing the stored table for the type of packet identified and thus obtaining for each data field a value representative of a storage requirement in memory and a field descriptor for that field; and

using the value and the field descriptor to load the packet into a target memory according to the target format specified by the field descriptor.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the field descriptor denotes the nature of the data field as one of a used field and an unused field.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the field descriptor denotes the nature of a used field as one of a text field and an integer field.

4. A method according to claim 2, comprising the further steps of :

using a source pointer to identify each data field in the received packet;

determining whether the data field is used or unused;

where the data field is used, using a target pointer to identify a location in memory based on the value representative of the storage requirement in memory of that field and storing the field in the identified location in memory;

where the data field is unused, using a target pointer to identify a location in memory based on the value representative of the storage requirement in memory of that field and moving the target pointer to a new location in memory corresponding to the end of the storage requirement.

5. A method according to claim 1, comprising the further step of, before storing the

tables for each type of packet, creating a table for each type of packet.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein each table comprises a plurality of rows, one or more of which rows corresponding to a field of the packet type associated with the table, each row having two bits allocated as the field descriptor.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein each table comprises a further row having a value of zero for indicating the end of the packet.

8. A method according to claim 6, wherein if both of the two bits are zero, the row corresponds to a used field which is an integer field.

9. A method according to claim 6, wherein if a first of the two bits is zero and a second of the two bits is one, the row corresponds to a used field which is a text field.

10. A method according to claim 6, wherein if a first of the two bits is one and a second of the two bits is zero, the row corresponds to an unused field.

11. A system for converting a packet of data from a source format to a target format, the packet comprising a type indicator, an endianess indicator and at least one data field, the system comprising :

    a table store for storing a table for each packet type, each table comprising for each data field of that packet type a value representative of a storage requirement in memory and a corresponding field descriptor denoting the nature of the data field;

    a packet buffer for receiving a packet in a source format;

    a packet reader for identifying the type of packet from the type indicator;

    a target memory; and

    a converter for accessing the stored table for the type of packet identified and thus obtaining for each data field a value representative of a storage requirement in memory and a field descriptor for that field and using the value and the field descriptor to load the packet into the target memory according to the target format specified by the field descriptor.